



J. TYLER McCaULEY
AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

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February 6, 2006

TO: Mayor Michael D. Antonovich
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe

FROM: J. Tyler McCauley 
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **GROUP HOME PROGRAM MONITORING REPORT – PHOENIX
HOUSES OF LOS ANGELES, INC., PHOENIX ACADEMY
LAKEVIEW TERRACE GROUP HOME**

We have completed a review of Phoenix Academy Lakeview Terrace Group Home (Group Home or Agency) operated by Phoenix Houses of Los Angeles, Incorporated. The Group Home contracts with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Probation Department (Probation).

Phoenix Academy Lakeview Terrace Group Home is a 140-bed facility, which provides care for children ages 13-18 years who exhibit behavioral, social, and emotional difficulties. At the time of the monitoring visit, Phoenix Academy Lakeview Terrace Group Home was providing services for four Los Angeles County DCFS children, forty-five Los Angeles County Probation children and ninety-one privately placed children.

Phoenix Academy Lakeview Terrace Group Home is located in the Third District.

Scope of Review

The purpose of the review is to determine whether the Agency is providing the services as outlined in their Program Statement. Additionally, the review covers basic child safety and licensing issues, and includes an evaluation of the Agency's Program Statement, internal policies and procedures, child case records, a facility inspection, and interviews with children placed in the Group Home at the time of the review. Interviews with children are designed to obtain their perspectives on the

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program services provided by the Agency, and to ensure adherence to the Foster Youth Bill of Rights.

Summary of Findings

Generally, the Agency is providing the treatment services as outlined in their Program Statement. The Agency needs to address several deficient areas.

Phoenix House Lakeview Terrace needs to provide children with clean and comfortable pillows; create and maintain current NSPs for all children; provide regular substance abuse support groups to all children with substance abuse problems; provide children with sufficient on-grounds and off-grounds recreational activities; provide children with sufficient opportunities to participate in planning activities; train staff to treat children with respect and dignity, and monitor staffs' interactions with children; provide an environment in which the children are free from interference with daily living functions; institute and maintain a fair system of discipline; provide healthy, nutritious, and well-prepared meals; provide children with minimum required weekly allowances; and encourage and assist children in creating and maintaining life books/photo albums.

Attached is a detailed report of the review.

Review of Report

We discussed our report with the Agency's management. In response to the recommendations made in the report, the Agency's management completed a corrective action plan (attached) which we approved. We thank the management and staff for their cooperation during our review.

If you have any questions, please contact me, or have your staff contact Mike Pirolo at (626) 293-1110.

JTM:MP:CC:asl

http://auditor.co.la.ca.us/group_home.asp

Attachments

c: David E. Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer
David Sanders, Ph.D., Director, DCFS
Paul Higa, Chief Probation Officer
Mary Kay, Executive Director, Phoenix Houses of Los Angeles
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

**Phoenix Houses of Los Angeles
Phoenix Academy
11600 Eldridge Avenue
Lakeview Terrace, California 91342
Phone: (818) 896-1121
License Number: 191222731
Rate Classification Level: 12**

I. Facility and Environment

Method of assessment – Observation

Comments:

Phoenix Academy Lakeview Terrace Group Home is located in a residential community. The exterior of the Group Home is well maintained. The front and back yards are clean, and adequately landscaped.

The interior of the Group Home is well maintained. The common quarters are neat and clean. There is adequate furniture and lighting in the Group Home. The Group Home provides a home-like environment.

Children's bedrooms are well maintained. The rooms are clean and orderly, and have age-appropriate personalized decorations. There is adequate furniture, lighting, and storage space. Window coverings and window screens are in good repair. The mattresses are comfortable, and the beds all have a full complement of linens. Children's sleeping arrangements are appropriate. However, many of the children's pillows are dirty and flat.

The Group Home maintains age appropriate and accessible recreational equipment. There are also board games, TVs, and DVD players. Books and resource materials, including computers with a variety of programs, are also available.

The Group Home maintains a sufficient supply of perishable and non perishable foods.

Recommendation

- 1. Phoenix Houses of Los Angeles management provide children with clean and comfortable pillows.**

II. Program Services

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and interviews

Sample size for interviews: Seven

Comments:

Children meet the Group Home's population criteria as outlined in their Program Statement. Children are assessed for needed services within thirty days of placement.

The treatment team develops and implements the Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) with input from the child. NSPs for six children are current, comprehensive, and include long and short-term goals. However, one child did not have a current NSP.

Case files reflect adequate documentation to show that children are receiving treatment services; however, children who have substance abuse problems report that they are not provided opportunities to regularly attend substance abuse support groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA).

Recommendations**2. Phoenix Houses of Los Angeles management:**

- a. Maintain current NSPs for all children.
- b. Provide regular substance abuse support groups to all children with substance abuse problems.

III. Educational and Emancipation Services**Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and interviews**

Sample size for interviews: Seven

Comments:

Children are attending school. Children are provided with educational support and resources to meet their educational needs, and are progressing satisfactorily in school. The Group Home's program includes the development of children's daily living, self-help, and survival skills.

Children are provided with opportunities to participate in emancipation and vocational programs as appropriate.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

VI. Personal Rights

Method of assessment –Interviews with children

Sample size for interviews: Seven

Comments:

Children are informed about the Group Home's policies and procedures. Children report that they feel safe in the Group Home, and are provided with appropriate staff supervision.

Children express satisfaction with the quality of their interactions with most of the staff; however, children report that some of the staff do not treat them with respect and dignity. The children also report that they are not always allowed to use the bathrooms, because the staff are "too lazy" to accompany them to the bathroom.

Children report that they are assigned chores that are reasonable and not too demanding. Children are able to make and receive personal telephone calls, send and receive unopened mail, and have private visitors. Children are able to attend religious services of their choice.

Children report that the discipline policies are consistently enforced; however, they feel that discipline policies are not fair, as all children get punished for the misbehavior of one child. The children state that as a result of this policy, they are unfairly restricted from participating in recreational activities, as the whole "unit" of children is "grounded" if one child on the unit misbehaves.

Although most of the children report satisfaction with meals and snacks, some of the children report that the food is not well prepared.

Children receive voluntary medical, dental, and psychiatric care.

Recommendations

4. Phoenix Houses of Los Angeles management:

- a. Train staff to treat children with respect and dignity, and monitor staffs' interactions with children.**
- b. Provide an environment in which the children are free from interference with daily living functions.**
- c. Institute and maintain a fair system of discipline.**

- d. Provide healthy, nutritious, and well-prepared meals.

VII. Clothing and Allowance

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and interviews

Sample size for interviews: Seven

Comments:

The Group Home provides appropriate clothing, items of necessity, and the required \$50 monthly clothing allowance to children. Children are given opportunities to select their own clothes. Clothing provided to children is of good quality and of sufficient quantity.

Children spend their allowances as they choose. However, the Group Home does not provide children with the required minimum weekly allowances.

The Group Home provides children with adequate personal care items.

Children are not encouraged or assisted in creating and maintaining photo albums/life books.

Recommendations

5. Phoenix Houses of Los Angeles management:

- a. Provide children with minimum required weekly allowances.
- b. Encourage and assist children in creating and maintaining life books/photo albums.

Phoenix House

**Candace Rhue, Group Home Audit Supervisor
Department of Auditor-Controller
500 W. Temple Street Room 515A
Los Angeles, CA 90012**

Dear Ms. Rhue:

Phoenix House is submitting the our corrective action plan as a result of your recent audit of our group home located in Lake View Terrace, CA.

I. Facility and Environment

Recommendation – Phoenix House management provide children with clean and comfortable pillows.

Corrective Action Plan -

On 12/6/05 Phoenix House purchased 156 pillows providing each of our residents the option of two pillows. (See attached invoice)

II. Program Services

Recommendation – Phoenix House management:

- a. create and maintain current NSPs for all children**
- b. provide regular substance abuse support groups to all children with substance abuse problems.**

Corrective Action Plan -

- a. A task force is currently reviewing our current documentation practices with the goal of improving the system and case manager's timeliness in meeting deadlines. Our target is to have a revised NSP linked to our monthly case conferences by February 1, 2006. We will present our revisions to CCL, DCFS and probation for final approval.**
- b. Phoenix House offers a NA support group every Sunday evening. Our residential treatment program is specifically addressing substance abuse issues as we are certified by the State of California – Alcohol and Drug Program.**

III. Educational and Emancipation Services

Recommendation – None

IV. Recreation and Activities

Recommendation - Phoenix House management:

- a. provide children with sufficient on-grounds and off-grounds recreational activities**
- b. provide children with opportunities to participate in planning activities.**

Corrective Action Plan -

- a. Each case manager will track client involvement in off grounds activities with our new monthly tracking form. (See attached)**
- b. A team of clients, representing each unit, has been formed led by our Recreation Services staff. They meet every week and are responsible for coordinating activities and special events.**

V. Psychotropic Medication

Recommendation – None

VI. Personal Rights

Recommendation – Phoenix House management:

- a. train and monitor staff to treat children with respect and dignity**
- b. provide an environment in which the children are free from interference with daily living functions**
- c. institute and maintain a fair system of discipline**
- d. ensure that children are not unfairly restricted from participating in recreational activities**
- e. provide healthy, nutritious, and well-prepared meals.**

Corrective Action Plan –

- a. During the month of January, an all Staff Meeting will be scheduled to review client rights emphasizing how staff should treat clients and in meeting their daily needs.**
- b. See # a.**
- c. See #a and a Senior Management Meeting will be scheduled in January to discuss fair discipline.**
- d. See #c. However, when a resident's behavior i.e. fighting, substance abusing, or sexual contact occurs will prohibit that resident from participating as we see this as an unsafe situation.**
- e. Phoenix House employs a registered dietician who routinely monitors our preparation and presentation of meals.**

VII. Clothing and Allowance

Recommendation – Phoenix House management:

- a. provide the children with minimum required base allowances
- b. encourage and assist children in creating and maintaining life books/photo albums.

Corrective Action Plan –

- a. Adjustments have been made regarding the base allowance rate with residents who have already discharged from treatment since November 2004. Current resident accounts have been adjusted to reflect \$7.00/weekly. (See attached)
- b. Life Books/Photo Albums will be incorporated into each caseload as a monthly activity effective February 2006.

If you have any questions or need further information on any of our corrective action plans, please contact me at (818) 686-3000 ext. 4171.

Very truly yours,



Mary Kaye Gerski, M.A.
Administrative Director
Phoenix House – Lake View Terrace Facility